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# The Shaw Bulletin

UNIVERSITY  
OF MICHIGAN

FEB 7 1953

PERIODICAL  
READING ROOM

Published by The Shaw Society of America, Inc.,  
and The Pennsylvania State University Press

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All progress consists in imposing on children  
nobler beliefs and better institutions than those  
at present inculcated and established.

— Bernard Shaw in  
*The Intelligent Woman's Guide*

# The Shaw Bulletin

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Vol. II, No. 4

January, 1958

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# Shaw's 1929 Program For Easing World Tensions — and How It Originated

by J. F. Lupis-Vukic<sup>1</sup>

Bernard Shaw visited the Dalmatian coast of Yugoslavia for the first time in May, 1929. With Mrs. Shaw, he debarked at Dubrovnik, site of the ancient city-republic of Ragusa, on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Impressed by the natural beauty of the area, and the proverbial gentleness of the people of Ragusa, Shaw wrote an appreciative letter for the inevitable reporters who followed him, addressed to Englishmen, Irishmen, Scots, Americans and holiday-makers of all nations to come by the millions to Yugoslavia, where they would be treated like kings. facetiously, he added, "The government will pay your hotel bills, and provide you with a perfect climate and the finest scenery of every kind for nothing. The people are everything you imagine yourselves to be and are not. They are hospitable, good humored and very good looking. Every town is a picture; every girl a movie star. Come quickly before they find us out. It is too good to last." To the numerous newspapermen he gave interviews on everything they asked, from the production of his plays at Zagreb to the Yugoslavian-Hungarian frontiers and the Peace of Trianon.

At that time I was manager of a bureau established at Split to be of service to distinguished foreign visitors. I went to Dubrovnik and invited Mr. Shaw to Split. A few days later I was his guest and guide for three days. At his hotel I translated to him news reports of his statements at Dubrovnik, and expressed my doubts that he had been quoted correctly. "Of course I was not," he said. "Now tell the reporters tomorrow morning that I will not receive them — Split reporters may also misquote me — but that I will leave with you a written statement for them before I sail from Split."

When the afternoon of the last day arrived without the promised statement from Mr. Shaw, I asked him whether it would not be easier

<sup>1</sup>A native of Dalmatia — where he now lives in semi-retirement — Mr. Lupis-Vukic began his career as a journalist in 1893, with the description of a hurricane along the Gulf coast of Louisiana. In addition to writing, editing and teaching, his various activities have included a seat in the Dalmatian Diet, two sojourns in the United States and one in South America, work as a war correspondent during the First World War and political imprisonment during both World Wars.

for him to dictate it to me instead of writing it himself. "Oh, no," he said; "I am going to write it with my own hand and will tell you why. There are many funny people in the world. Some day one of them may want to buy it from you. Just listen: Years ago we moved to our country house after thirty years of residence in London. When you live in one house for a long time, much trash gathers there which you want to get rid of when moving. I made two piles of such things and telephoned to an antiquarian friend of mine. He came and said, 'For the bigger pile I'll give you £30, and for the smaller one £20.' I told him to take both away. A couple of months later, the papers reported that an American woman sold a second-hand history of England for \$200, all the margins of which were filled with annotations by Bernard Shaw — hence its high value. Now I know that it was a foolish history, and I never read foolish books. So I immediately wrote a letter to *The Observer*, in which I said that I never read that book, nor made the alleged annotations. The antiquarian came to me and said, 'But I bought that book from you. I was not fortunate enough to sell it for \$200; the American woman bought it from me for a small sum.' Yes, I interrupted him, but that book was my father-in-law's. He made those annotations."

Mr. Shaw laughed heartily. An hour later he handed me a statement authorized for publication and said, "You have the real stuff. Should you sell it, invite all your friends and give them a good treat. I don't drink but I hear you have good wines in Dalmatia, and that you are all wine drinkers. I will not object if you drink a few bottles to my health."

I translated Mr. Shaw's statement. But I was ordered by the provincial governor to submit the statement to him, prior to publication, to be sent to Belgrade for censorship. Three of Shaw's points were stricken out by the censor. I did not want to publish Shaw's statement mutilated, and kept the present text unpublished until after his death. It appeared in the Zagreb magazine *Republika* for November-December, 1950.

The present times are mad. Perhaps Mr. Shaw's statement still represents a sound political view. In his Shavian way he suggests how some of our complicated international questions should be treated and settled. His ideas on how mixed nationalities should regulate their relations is sensible. His propositions on how generals and politicians should be treated are not only Shavian irony but sound ideas based on his experience of world events, for the worst "settlers" of international post-war problems are very often those who led in the conflict. The second part of the statement shows the manly way he defended authors rendered helpless by inadequate or non-existent copyright laws.

In a confused and gloomy world Shaw's words are worth remembering for their wit and their light. They follow.

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\* Editor's note: probably a reference to Dan Rider, who told his side of the story about carting away G.B.S.'s papers in *Adventures with Bernard Shaw* (London, 1925).



# **A Statement**

## **written by Mr. G. Bernard Shaw**

### **while in Split, Jugoslavia in May 1929**

Mr. Bernard Shaw's attention having been called at Split to certain reports of his conversations in the Press, he has handed the following written statement to Mr. J. F. Lupis-Vukic of that city.

Speaking as a professional playwright, with the strongest pecuniary inducements to keep public opinion equally friendly to me in Belgrade, Bucarest, Budapest, Rome, Vienna, Paris and Berlin, I must keep my mind a political blank, ignorant of the new map of Europe, and knowing nothing of frontiers except as places where customs officers make chalk marks on my luggage and are mostly kind enough to take my word for its contents.

But if I were safely domiciled at the South Pole, and in a position to express opinions which please nobody, I should perhaps urge the following precepts on the seals and penguins:

1. In a fully civilized continent it would not matter to anyone on which side of a frontier his house stood.
2. All frontiers should be ethnographic and not strategic.
3. When an ethnographic frontier happens to be also a strategic frontier, it should be left entirely undefended, like the frontier between Canada and the United States of America.
4. When an ethnographic frontier is made physically impossible by a mixture of races in the same place, those who feel themselves placed in the position of foreigners must either change their domicile or else accept the situation as emigrants do in America, and make the best of it.
5. Those who seek repatriation must often be prepared to find themselves worse governed by their fellow countrymen than by strangers.
6. The League of Nations should at once prepare an ethnographic map of Europe with rectified frontiers, thereby placing the Powers which insist on maintaining the preset frontiers in the predicament of being "in contravention" face to face with the conscience of humanity.
7. At the beginning of a war all vociferously ardent patriots should be interned in Switzerland at the expense of their respective governments; and at the end of it all the statesmen and generals who have conducted it should be sent to St. Helena and shut off from all communication with the rest of the world for ten years.

8. The Treaty of Trianon should be kept in continual remembrance as a classic example of the great British art of How Not to Do It.

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On the subject of international copyright, for which nobody cares two dinars except Dr. Albini of the Zagreb Opera and a handful of authors, composers, artists, publishers, theatre managers and such vagabonds (including myself), I can express myself without reserve.

Dr. Albini declares that whenever a play of mine is performed in Zagreb at his theatre I am paid ten times as if I were a native Slav. I am greatly obliged to Dr. Albini for his generosity; but what does the government official who presumably audits the State theatre subventions say to this? I have no legal right to the money. Does the auditor surcharge Dr. Albini with it?

Jugoslavia has allowed the rest of the world to perform the works of Yugoslavian authors and composers without contributing to their support on condition that Jugoslavia may do the same to the authors and composers of other nationalities. I do not complain of this arrangement; but if I were a Yugoslavian author I should complain of it most bitterly, as it would mean starvation for me. What Yugoslavian theatre manager would pay me for leave to perform my plays when he could get all the most popular English, French, German, American, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Dutch and Scandinavian plays for nothing? I should be like Noah trying to sell buckets of water. However, as I am fortunately not a Yugoslavian dramatic poet it is no business of mine. It is very good of Dr. Albini to throw me alms; but surely the native writers, out of whose mouths I am taking bread, need it much more. They must regard the refusal of Jugoslavia to join the International Copyright Convention as a relic of brigandage. And all brigands do not, like the delightful Dr. Albini, pay ransom to their captives instead of extorting it from them.

Split, 25th May 1929.

G. Bernard Shaw

# Harmony and Discord in *Good King Charles*

by Norbert F. O'Donnell<sup>1</sup>

*In Good King Charles's Golden Days* has hardly received the critical attention it deserves as one of the last works of a major writer. Critics have seen in it only what is most obvious — the similarities between Charles and other Shavian heroes, the implicit plea for tolerance in the final act in which Charles discusses with his wife the difficulties of ruling the unruly English. The long first-act discussion, involving, among others, Isaac Newton, Godfrey Kneller, George Fox and Charles himself, has seemed inconclusive and unrelated to the political theme of the second act. In reality the first act is inconclusive in only one sense: it does not produce the disillusionments and conversions which are commonly the climax of Shavian discussion. Shaw has placed on the stage representatives of sharply contrasting philosophical perspectives. The implicit focus of their discussion is the problem of knowledge. The upshot is not disillusionments and conversions but a revelation of the possibility of a degree of harmony in the world of intellectual discussion which is ironically contrasted with the discord prevailing in the world of political action Charles knows so well. Read in this way, *Good King Charles* is not only a unified whole but a significant revelation of the state of mind and spirit in which Shaw wrote his last plays.

The major figures of the first-act discussion represent a number of the autonomous approaches to the problem of knowledge in the modern world. Although they all have something of the typical paradoxical individual life of Shaw's characters, their philosophical positions can be clearly charted: Newton is the scientific rationalist, Kneller the aesthetic intuitionist, Fox the religious mystic, and Charles the pragmatist. Their conversation, punctuated by social crises created by Newton's housekeeper and Charles' mistresses, ranges from the question of the king's faithfulness to his women to the problem of the true picture of the cosmos. The harmony which they discover lies in a considerable measure of agreement among the insights yielded by their drastically different intellectual perspectives — a harmony in the beginning obscured by emotion-laden words and the conventional prejudices lying behind them. The movement of the first act of the play is from sharp, frequently emotional, disagreement to at least a measure of agreement. At the end of the act the characters symbolically troop off the stage to have dinner together.

<sup>1</sup> Professor O'Donnell teaches English at Bowling Green University, Ohio.

Isaac Newton is so comically habituated to the methods of the scientific rationalist that he solves a simple problem of household arithmetic through a complicated system of logarithms; he attempts to determine the degree of the king's fidelity to one of his mistresses through an elaborate mathematical computation. Yet he is sufficiently a man of his religious age to be concerned when he learns that Fox is disturbed by the seeming contradiction between the discoveries of the Royal Society and the revelations of scripture. He hastens to remind Fox that the process of the revelation of God's purposes is continuous and to explain that the "philosopher" (scientist) is inevitably prepared to believe in miracles because he is aware of so many of them in everyday life. A little later Newton and Fox are at one another's throats, each calling the other "infidel." This because Fox, in his hatred of orthodox churchmen, has attacked Newton's history of the world, based upon dates supplied by Archbishop Ussher. Charles stills the tumult by reminding the two that any thoughtful person is likely to seem an infidel to common people and by posing the characteristically pragmatic question, "What does it matter to us whether the world is four thousand years old, or, as I should guess, ten thousand?"<sup>2</sup> In these exchanges between Newton and Fox one can see in small the movement of the entire first-act discussion. One conflict between the two is unreal because they do not really disagree. The other is unreal because its issue is unimportant.

Newton's most serious intellectual clash — one which cannot be wholly resolved — is with Kneller. He finds the argument baffling because Kneller, the spokesman for aesthetic intuition, can blandly assert: "Man: artists do not prove things. They do not need to. They *know* them" (p. 785). The disagreement arises because Kneller disputes the conclusion to which Newton's conception of a rectilinear universe has brought him — that "a right line is a straight line." From his experience as an artist, Kneller is intuitively certain that "The right line, the line of beauty, is a curve" (p. 782). Furthermore, when Newton sees the scientific implications of what he has said, Kneller is anachronistically willing and able to leap to the twentieth-century conclusion that the universe is curvilinear. The conflict, of course, cannot be resolved. However, when Newton resists the proposal that Kneller paint his portrait on the ground that a man who lives in a curved universe would undoubtedly distort his features, Louise de K roualle, one of Charles' mistresses, points out that Newton's own theory of gravitation would produce curved lines on the canvas as surely as Kneller's conception of the "line of beauty." In many practical matters, she implies, the differences between pictures of the cosmos do not matter. Louise's pragmatic wisdom helps to bring Newton to remark tolerantly to Kneller as all go in to dinner, "And at bottom I know no more about gravitation than you do about beauty" (p. 793).

In the course of his disagreement with Newton, Kneller makes a powerful impression on Fox by his contention that his artist's hand is the hand of God, a manifestation of the creative energy which is God. In fact, Fox, the religious mystic, the apostle of the "inner light," finds

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Plays of Bernard Shaw* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1949-57), II, 753. All references are to this edition.

himself making surprising new friends throughout the discussion. Most surprising of all is the kinship which he discovers between himself and Charles, the scandalously merry monarch. When Fox speaks disparagingly of the playhouse, Charles disconcerts him by reminding him that it is "a place where two or three are gathered together" (p. 773). When Fox denounces the fustian declaimed by the players, Charles remarks that it is in any event no worse than the fustian of the religious ranters, and Fox can only agree. Most impressive of all to Fox is his recollection of Charles' pragmatic wisdom — which seems to him to have been "a flash of the inner light" — in stopping the butchering of the regicides "on the ground if he punished them they could never punish themselves" (p. 791). In the end Fox can only be startled by the measure of agreement between himself and Charles: "Things come to my knowledge by the grace of God; yet the same things have come to you who live a most profane life and have no sign of grace at all" (p. 780).

Charles brings to intellectual discussion the pragmatic understanding which enables him to rule a kingdom torn by sectarian passion. He seeks to reconcile conflicting philosophies as he seeks to reconcile conflicting parties. Again and again he directs the conversation in such a way as to reveal areas of agreement, to still rising passions which threaten to obscure them. He is clearly aware of the disturbances of discussion created by such emotionally weighted and ambiguous terms as "infidel" and "beauty." His attitudes are the attitudes of the play. He understands well enough the real disagreements which divide his world — for example, his own firm political disagreement with his brother James. Yet with a touch of Shavian overstatement, he expresses one of the fundamental themes of the play when he says to Fox, "You and I are mortal men, Pastor. It is not possible for us to differ very greatly. You have to wear leather breeches lest you be mistaken for me" (p. 780).

Not that the play should be taken to imply that the attainment of any sort of harmony among men is easy. The world of the first act of *Good King Charles* is perhaps more nearly a world of purely intellectual discussion than any Shaw ever put on the stage. Yet even in this atmosphere history produces its ironic conflicts and human passions arise to obscure the degree of harmony which exists. It is because the characters of Newton and Fox are not entirely intellectual abstractions but are men of their times that they quarrel so violently. Newton is the man of reason and Fox is the gentle "friend" of mankind, but both are ironically capable of disagreeing passionately over the degree of intellectual authority to be granted an archbishop. Charles is able to restore calm only by offering an anachronistically Shavian comment on the meaninglessness of their dispute. A condition of harmony between the two seems to be that they detach themselves from the quarrels of their historical era. A similarly serious point is made by the most glaring anachronism in the play — Shaw's putting in Kneller's mouth the twentieth-century rejection of Newton's conception of a rectilinear universe. This may seem at worst merely a piece of buffoonery, at best a demonstration of Shaw's hostility to Newton's kind of mind. Its real point, however, is as an ironic dramatization of the fate of intellectual positions which seem final to those who conceive them. At his moment in time, Newton cannot bring himself to accept the judgment of history on his cosmology. He does, however, show in the end a tolerance of his antagonist based on the very modern



realization that both his first principles and Kneller's are, in the words of Shaw's preface, "pure dogma" (i. e., pure hypothesis).

Thus Shaw's dramatic reflection on the possibilities of agreement and tolerance in the intellectual realm. The reason why he should have concerned himself with this subject is clear in his portrayal of the world of political and social conflict outside Newton's doors. When Newton and Fox call one another "infidel," Charles sharply reminds them, "Now the one thing that is true of all three of us is that if the common people knew our real minds they would hang us and bury us in unconsecrated ground" (p. 753). Ironically, whatever the potentialities of harmony in the realm of the intellect, the unintellectual world is unready to receive its "saints." It is a world of intolerance, of discord.

The passionate intolerance of the English sects is the subject of the second-act dialogue between Charles and his wife. Catherine yearns nostalgically for the kind of harmony represented by the monolithic society of Portugal and is baffled by the English: "In Portugal there is a holy Church: we know what we believe; and we all believe the same things. But here the Church itself is a heresy; and there are a thousand other heresies: almost as many heretics as there are people." (p. 799) Charles sees that the sort of order for which Catherine yearns is an historical impossibility in seventeenth-century England, that it is in fact based on suppression of the individual conscience. Of the quarreling sects he says, "Well, the more the merrier, if only they could let one another live. But they will not do even that." (p. 803) He wishes for an atmosphere in which men might find the sort of harmony in the midst of difference that he has found with George Fox.

Surely Shaw chose to dramatize the plight of Charles II because — as clearly as that of the imaginary King Magnus of *The Apple Cart* — it seemed to him to resemble the situation facing the Shavian version of the man of good will in the twentieth century. The portrayal of our time in the late plays is of a culture on the brink of grand disasters, a culture offering little hope that it may be changed by intellectual and spiritual conversions of the sort dramatized in Shaw's earlier plays. Small wonder then that *Good King Charles* should be a dramatic reflection on tolerance — on the grounds for it evident to Shaw in the world of intellectual discussion and on its ironic absence in the world of political and social action.



# Shaw and Restoration Comedy

by Martin L. Kornbluth<sup>1</sup>

In a dozen or more places in the various non-dramatic writings of Bernard Shaw, he makes reference to Restoration Drama, the Comedy of Manners, specific comic writers of the Restoration period, or to others closely associated with the period. And in the major play of his last years, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939), Shaw even returned to the Restoration for his cast and his theme, warmly portraying not only Newton and Fox, but the profligate Charles and a seraglio of Nell Gwynn, Barbara Villiers and Louise de Kéroualle. Yet, though the evidence of the play and a few other remarks made much earlier in his career may be considered complimentary, most of his comments about the period are harsh, and several are contradictory.

Shaw's attitude toward the dramatists of the Restoration is generally one of severe reprimand for their lasciviousness, profligacy, sterility of idea, dullness, and overall lack of art. His attitude in this respect seems in keeping with his Puritanical notions as a whole, and one is not surprised to find Shaw reacting so violently to a period in English history and drama which is marked by its looseness and moral freedom. What is surprising, however, is the remarkable extent to which the plays of Shaw are similar to the Restoration Comedy of Manners, notwithstanding his open repudiation of the form: he seems, inadvertently as it were, to emulate it, incorporating many of the aspects of the earlier comedies in his own.

Such a similarity was noticed, briefly, as early as 1913. At that time, I. Edelman, in a letter to the *Nation*, commented on the similarities between Shaw and Restoration Comedy: "Both Shaw and the drama after 1660 are reactionary. The former is a reaction against present [1913] thought and sentiment; the latter against previous Puritanism." Edelman then goes on to show the parallels in three ways: the "absence of the breath of nature," an "anti-social spirit," and an "abundance of wit." I shall show later in this paper the specific ways in which these similarities, among others, exist. There are at least a half-dozen other ways that Shaw's plays — not every one of them of course — resemble Restoration Comedies. But first I think it might be best to look a bit more closely at Shaw's professed attitude toward the Restoration dramatists. This is seen mainly in his Prefaces.

He speaks of the "dissoluteness of the faithless wits of the Restora-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kornbluth teaches Communications at Michigan State University.

<sup>2</sup> I. Edelman, letter in *Nation*, 18 Sept. 1913, p. 259.

tion,"<sup>73</sup> and refers to the Comedy of Manners dramatists as "a line of comedic playwrights who . . . had nothing fundamentally positive to say." And further in the same Preface, Shaw claims that "from Congreve to Sheridan they were so sterile in spite of their wit that they did not achieve between them the output of Moliere's single lifetime," and moreover, that "they were all (not without reason) ashamed of their profession and preferred to be regarded as mere men of fashion with a rakish hobby." In another Preface, Shaw talks of "the flamboyant profligacy of the Restoration,"<sup>75</sup> while in still another, the Restoration theatre is held responsible for the association of prostitution with theatre-going; and Shaw concludes that "to this . . . we owe the Puritan formula that the theatre door is the gate of hell."<sup>76</sup> And in the Preface to *Overruled*, he criticizes "the very extensive dramatic literature which takes as its special department the gallantries of married people," citing specifically the treatment of such a theme "in the jesting vein of Restoration Comedy." Shaw condemns the licensing procedure, and terms it "an absurd rule [by which] Wycherley is permitted and Shelley prohibited,"<sup>78</sup> and in a letter to R. E. Golding Bright (2 May 1900), he "appeal[s] . . . to the Puritans to come to the rescue of the stage," comparing himself, still in the same letter, to Jeremy Collier.<sup>8</sup> And in another of his letters, this one to Barker, he refers to the guarantee fund which was to be for the Savoy management, in which "the antagonistic attitude of Shaw to the Restoration dramatists is defined . . ."<sup>10</sup> He is especially antagonistic to "Congreve, who thought that syphilis and cuckoldry and concupiscent old women are things to be laughed at."<sup>11</sup>

But Shaw does not find Restoration Drama completely obnoxious. In another letter to Golding Bright (11 Nov. 1895), he advises the young man to "read a rhymed play of Dryden's, a play of Wycherley's, [and] some of Congreve's."<sup>12</sup> And, Shaw admits, "Dryden wrote heroic couplets in a virile, stately, handsome and withal human way . . ."<sup>13</sup> In a number of places throughout his works, Shaw mentions Cibber's *Apology* favorably, and even professes a fondness for Nell Gwynn long before he used her as a major character in *Good King Charles' Golden Days*.

There should then be no questioning Shaw's familiarity with Restoration Comedy, or the fact that he thought, for the most part, little of it. But as we shall later see, Shaw is a mass of contradictions. Other statements he makes concern one of the major themes of Restoration Comedy — adultery — and Shaw has much to say about adultery, both as a topic to be treated in the drama, and as a phenomenon of everyday life. "I expressed my opinion, at the outset of my career as a playwright," Shaw

<sup>73</sup> John Bull's *Other Island*, Preface.

<sup>74</sup> *Back to Methuselah*, Preface.

<sup>75</sup> *The Millionairess*, Preface.

<sup>76</sup> *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet*, Preface.

<sup>77</sup> *Overruled*, Preface.

<sup>78</sup> Mrs. Warren's *Profession*, Preface.

<sup>8</sup> E. J. West, ed., *Advice to a Young Critic* (New York, 1955), p. 114.

<sup>10</sup> C. B. Purdom, ed., *Bernard Shaw's Letters to Granville Barker*. New York, Theatre Arts, 1957, p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> *The Six of Calais*, Preface.

<sup>12</sup> West, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> *Three Plays by Brieux*, Preface.

wrote in the Preface to *Overruled*, "that adultery is the dullest of themes on the stage . . . the romantic adulterers have all been intolerable bores." And in the Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, he terms "clandestine adultery the dullest of all subjects for a serious author." Yet, the plot of *Overruled* is highly suggestive of adultery even though none is actually committed; and the characters in *Getting Married* fully believe (as does the reader for a time) that Reginald has committed adultery. Now I do not give this seemingly contradictory attitude toward adultery to imply that Shaw actually thought it an attractive theme for dramatic treatment, but to demonstrate that he was capable of having opposing sets of beliefs concerning a particular issue. To say this is to say no more than that Shaw was a human being. And while his attitude toward the Restoration Drama and its authors, in light of the above statements seems overwhelmingly antagonistic, he yet incorporates into his own plays many of the devices, situations, characterizations, and themes treated by the very dramatists he condemns.

First of all, let us outline what some of the similarities are. Any such list may begin with plot structure, go on to setting, dialogue, characterization, tone, emotional content, man-woman relationships, and logically conclude with significant parallels of specific plot situations.

It has become almost trite to comment on the absence of overt action in Shaw. He has been accused of writing plays in which absolutely nothing happens, and for the most part such an observation is thoroughly justified. This lack of "action" is characteristic, but, of course, no more true for *all* of Shaw's plays than it is for *all* of the Restoration Comedies of Manners; it merely is a generalization which may be applied to both. Any attempt to summarize the "action" of a Restoration Comedy is a frustrating task. The same, to a great degree, is true of a Shaw play. With but few exceptions, nothing very much "happens" in Shaw's plays. Essentially they are also comedies of manners; they treat the foibles of his times just as Congreve's and Wycherley's treated the foibles of theirs. Any treatment primarily of manners leaves little room for action. Desmond MacCarthy, discussing two of Shaw's plays, provides the best clue by his brief summaries. Of *John Bull's Other Island*, he says: "It is a play with hardly any story, with no climax, without the vestige of a plot, and without anything like an ending."<sup>14</sup> And of *Getting Married*: "The play is all talk; but it is brilliant talk, which starts many hares, and throws light on human nature; and however serious in intention, the dialogue is rampageously gay."<sup>15</sup> If we did not know that MacCarthy was writing about Shaw, these remarks could apply to any comedy of Etherege, Shadwell, Wycherley, or Dryden.

Another obvious similarity between Shaw's plays and Restoration Comedies is in setting, which Edelman referred to as the "absence of the breath of nature." Rarely in Restoration Comedy does the action of the play go outside; nor does it in Shaw. In both it is usually within doors, and the outdoors is used merely as a physical location, having no integral bearing on furthering the plot. In addition, the weather has little to do with furthering the action or influencing the behavior or

<sup>14</sup>Desmond MacCarthy, *Shaw*. London, MacGibbon & Kee, 1951, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 155.

emotions of the characters. In both types, they go their ways, oblivious of their locale, and indifferent to climate. They do little travelling; once they get into a room they are content to remain there. Rather than shift scenes, Shaw has his characters leave rooms and has others replace them.

Perhaps the most memorable aspect of Restoration Comedy is the wittiness of the dialogue. The same is true of a Shaw comedy. For while Shaw undoubtedly put his "message" foremost, it is the sparkling *way* his characters express themselves, as much as *what* they say, that has come to be the outstanding notion one carries away with him after reading or seeing Shaw. And if the Restoration holds no other attraction for the critics, reader, or viewer, he still pays tribute to its sparkling wit. C. E. M. Joad, in comparing Shaw with the Restoration comic writers, claims that Restoration wit is an end in itself, while Shaw's witticisms have more "meat" to them. The latter may, Joad maintains, be analyzed in terms of social conditions, whereas Restoration wit is purely ornamental.<sup>16</sup> The truth of Joad's thesis admitted, the point nevertheless remains that Shaw and the Restoration are comparable in *using* wit, regardless of the purpose intended by its use. In addition to the wit of the dialogue, there is also the epigrammatic quality. "The Revolutionist's Handbook" is but a codification of the many separate places in Shaw's plays where this quality may be demonstrated. Terseness of expression, the barbed edge, the wry and cynical humor, and the easily remembered point are all characteristic of the epigrammatic dialogue of both types of drama.

It has often been claimed that many of Shaw's characters lack flesh and blood; that they are merely mouthpieces for some doctrine the playwright wishes to verbalize — they have, in fact, been likened to the "humorous" characters of Jonson. While some of his people do stand out as human beings in their own right, it must be admitted that there is a great deal of truth in this accusation. And in this respect we can draw several parallels of types found in both Shaw and in the Restoration. Citing MacCarthy once again, we are inclined to agree that "his technique is as far removed from realism as eighteenth-century technique. His characters seldom speak words they would actually utter; each says instead the things most typical of his or her point of view."<sup>17</sup> Is Vivie Warren, for example — the personification of Shavian feminine emancipation — characterized very much differently from Margerie Pinchwife — the personification of rural naivete? Both act according to their prescribed "humour," and no significant change takes place in either. Shaw also employs another characteristic device of the Restoration wits — the use of charactonyms to designate his people. From *Heartbreak House*, we get Mrs. Hushabye and Lady Utterword; from *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, the Captain; from *Widower's Houses*, Mr. Lickcheese; from *Pygmalion*, Alfred Doolittle — the list could be extended. This is a very short distance from Lady Wishfort, Sir Fopling Flutter, Fainall, and Captain Manly. And finally, the characters lack deep emotion. They seem, very often, to be amused by what is happening to them in the play, almost detached from the events as though they were happening to someone else. One rarely, for example, sympathizes with Kitty Warren

<sup>16</sup>C. E. M. Joad, *Shaw*. London, Victor Gollancz, 1949, pp. 80-82.

<sup>17</sup>MacCarthy, p. 178.

for her unfortunate life, or for General Bridgenorth for his unrequited love. In the first instance we may feel aroused at the circumstances which led Mrs. Warren into her profession and take, as Shaw did, a righteously indignant attitude toward the society which forced her into it; but we certainly cannot empathize with her as a person. In this case she may be compared with many of the bawds in Restoration Comedy. And "Boxer" Bridgenorth is hardly any different from any of the earlier superannuated lovers in Restoration Comedy — laughable because of his devotion.

The Restoration Comedies were a product of a cynical age, and as such reflected this cynicism and irreverence. Marriage, the Church, doctors, lawyers — all came in for probing examination, and invariably ridicule. And although the motivations are different for Shaw — the Restoration poked fun just for the sake of poking fun without the concomitant purpose of reform — the iconoclasm is nevertheless carried on in a similar way. Shaw has much to say on marriage: summed up, it is an unnecessary evil. Marriage is hardly taken seriously, and his married people carry on (not of course to the extremes of the Restoration) as though life were meant for intrigue. The same businesslike attitude is present, albeit in a different form. For while there is not the concern with "portions," there is the same feeling of detachment and coldness, the drawing up of similar "agreements."

The Restoration dramatists ridiculed anyone who took himself too seriously; among other idealists, this included the sincere practitioner of law, medicine, and religion, if any may be found in Restoration comedy. Shaw, too, takes a rather tongue-in-cheek attitude toward the idealist, whether he is the Christian martyr of *Androcles*, the self-righteous minister of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, the noble young do-gooder of *Widowers' Houses*, or the pretentious physician of *The Philanderer*. All are blasted out of their seriousness, if they had any, and often are made to appear either fools or hypocrites. Shaw respects no one and no group. Neither did the Restoration wits.

This cynicism is apparent in Shaw's anti-romantic treatment of emotions. Family life is made a mockery of — certainly there is little love lost between Vivie Warren and her mother; surely few tears are shed by Mrs. George at the loss of her five children. It is, in fact, as if the family did not exist. In the typical Restoration Comedy, we have the vague allusion that a father has died and the son has come into the estate; in Shaw, the parent is often a foil, occasionally a fool, and often non-existent. Between the sexes, too, there is little emotion. Men pursue women, and women pursue men — of sexual attraction there is an abundance. But this too is treated rather coldly and matter-of-factly, and has none of the usual accompanying romantic notions attached. In the Restoration, too, love as a deep feeling was considered ridiculous. In the Restoration plays, it is a game, or a battle of the sexes. And although romanticists like to interpret the flippant attitude of characters supposedly in love for something deeper, it is only through their interpretation that it becomes so. In this sense we are reminded of the occasional romantic misconception some readers hold of Dick Dudgeon's attitude toward Judith in *The Devil's Disciple*. I do not, of course, deny the existence of love in the late seventeenth century. Nor do I deny its existence in the late nineteenth or twentieth. I do not say that Shaw felt no love;



I do not maintain that Congreve or Vanbrugh felt none. In the Restoration the emotion is ignored or ridiculed because it was the fashion to do so. In Shaw it is ignored — no one can really be certain why — perhaps because he was incapable as a dramatist of capturing the feeling, or more likely because he was too concerned with the overruling idea of a play to allow love to have any part in it. In any event, love has no real place in a Shaw play, and in this respect it is as though he used the Restoration Comedy as a model. Certainly witty dialogue precludes serious treatment of any emotion; but not of any idea. It apparently precluded both in the Restoration, but we must remember that the dramatist of Charles II's court was a dilettante; while Shaw was a social reformer. But whatever the reason, neither the Restoration plays nor Shaw's plays give a very prominent role to the emotions. The similarity is evident in this respect; the reasons for it do not concern us here.

Like the men and women in Restoration Drama, the men and women in Shaw's plays are engaged in an almost continual war of wits. Among those of equal station, the contest is won by a superiority of the logic employed by either the man or the woman. But it is logic which determines who wins, not an overwhelming outpouring of emotion. The surest way to lose out in the battle of the sexes was to allow emotion to overcome reason. Passion, perhaps, but never sincere emotion. And even the passion of the Restoration is a stylized sort of thing, harkening back to the courtly love tradition. But the woman is just as eager to snare the man into marriage as he is to seduce her. Millamant is after Mirabell as much as he is after her — notwithstanding her standoffishness and his gallantries. Ann Whitefield pursues Tanner, and he is not nearly so unwilling to be caught as he intimates. And just as often as not, the men and women end up getting married in Shaw, even as they do in the Restoration Comedies. And just as often as not, they do so unaided by moonlight or soft violins, because it is the logical thing to do.

The man's attitude toward the woman demonstrates several parallels between the two forms. In Restoration Comedy, one of the stock characters was the rake: his whole relationship was based on one thing — the conquest. In *The Philanderer*, Charteris is a prime example of this type, as he goes from Grace to Julia, with scarcely a moment's breath between the two. Another illustration of this type may be seen in Hotchkiss (*Getting Married*), who, while engaged to Leo takes advantage of the first opportunity to overwhelm Mrs. George with a seduction speech that would make Etherege's Dorimant or Vanbrugh's Loveless envious. And Sergius's intrigues with the servant Louka (*Arms and the Man*), while engaged to Raina are highly reminiscent of Farquhar's Aimwell in pursuit of Cherry in *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Another parallel may be seen in the feelings of married people, especially those who have been married for some time. The whole situation of *Overruled* follows this pattern. Gregory Lunn and Mrs. Juno, Mrs. Lunn and Sibthorpe Juno carry on intrigues, which, in everything except perhaps intensity, are identical to the gallantries of any married couple in Restoration Comedy. And one of the familiar themes of the Restoration Comedy is the man who continually tries to get something from the woman. Sometimes this concerns the young "blood" trying to seduce a servant; sometimes he is merely attempting to bilk a landlady. Shaw's men too use women for their own ends. And while we rarely see a traditional scene of seduction,



isn't Professor Higgins's interest in Eliza Doolittle an academic one — purely for his own interest?<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps one of the most outstanding ways in which the plays of Shaw resemble those of Restoration comic writers is the similarities of their plots. *The Philanderer*, for example, is constructed almost identically to an earlier comedy of manners. There is, first of all, virtually no plot. There is practically no scene shifting. There is a great deal of intrigue based on sexual attraction. Charteris's attempting to marry off Julia so that his field with Grace will be clear is almost an exact parallel to the antics of Shadwell's Lovel in *The Sullen Lovers*. There are the doddering fathers almost always associated with Restoration Comedy; there is even a recognition scene between Old Craven and Old Cuthbertson after some thirty-five years of separation. The dialogue between Grace and Charteris exemplifies the conventional duel of the sexes — they are more concerned with parrying for position with one another than they are in achieving any material results with one another. There is the Club — the meeting place which can be compared to either the Park or the Waters in Restoration Comedy.

*Getting Married* is essentially a dialogue concerning the proper form and conduct to be followed in a marriage. The patter between Edith and Sykes, for example, is similar to that between Congreve's Millamant and Mirabell (*The Way of the World*) when the two discuss — somewhat more obliquely — the duties and responsibilities each partner is to assume. Once again, there is no action, but merely a running banter between two characters concerning the conditions of marriage. Other elements of similarity are the two coincidences: the pamphlet that both Edith and Sykes just happen to read on their wedding morning; Incognita Appassionata turning out to be Collins' sister-in-law. Another device which reminds the reader of Restoration Comedy is that of having several characters speak excitedly in unison. This may also be seen in *Man and*

<sup>18</sup>The plot of *Pygmalion* brings up another interesting connection between Shaw and the Restoration. The following is an oft-related incident concerning the Earl of Rochester and Elizabeth Barry. "She is said to have been originally a servant of a Lady Shelton in Norfolk. Rochester 'entered into a Wager, that by proper Instruction, in less than six Months he would engage she should be the finest Player on the Stage.' He took immense trouble in teaching her 'not only the proper cadence or sounding of the voice, but to seize also the passions, and adapt her whole behaviour to the situations of the character.' The girl, who 'at the age of 15 could neither sing nor dance, no not even a Country-Dance,' was thus engaged by the Duke's Company in 1674. Her first appearance was a complete failure; and she was dismissed at the end of a season. Rochester refused, however, to admit defeat and made further efforts to develop his pupil's talents. Probably through his influence she was re-engaged in the following year and played the part of Draxilla in Otway's *Alcibiades* (1675) with great success." This incident is reported in V. de Sola Pinto's *Restoration Carnival*, The Folio Society, London, 1954, p. 160, but the particulars may also be found in Davies' *Dramatic Miscellanies* (1783-84), Curll's *The History of the English Stage* (1741), and Colley Cibber's *Apology* (1740). Since it is known that Shaw read Cibber, it may be conjectured that he used this story as a basis for his *Pygmalion*. In all its essential details this is the same sort of wager that Higgins entered into with Pickering, even down to the time specified for the bet. The similarity of the women's names may, however, be pure coincidence, but other similarities, especially that of the "proper cadence or sounding of the voice," are difficult to gloss over so cavalierly.

*Superman* and *Overruled*. About any Shadwell play will serve as comparison in this respect. In general, Shaw's whole advocacy of sexual freedom is characteristic of the older form. The characters rail against marriage, but not against the physical relations. And while Shaw logically substantiates the need for sexual freedom — especially in terms of society's unequal demands on women — and the Restoration merely takes it as an unquestioned license, the point of emphasis is the same. Yet, in spite of all their objections to marriage, Edith and Sykes get married after all, just as Dorimant, Manly, and Millamant do.

*Overruled*, another of Shaw's more minor comedies of manners, concerns the liberties taken by a couple already married. The whole plot concerns flirtation, with further action anticipated, in which two men make love to each other's wives: Gregory Lunn to Mrs. Juno; Sibthorpe Juno to Mrs. Lunn. A confrontation scene occurs, whereupon all parties concerned "discover" that their affections to their legitimate partners are stronger than their romantic infatuations. Now this particular playlet finds a strong counterpart in Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode*. This play revolves around Rhodophil's attempts to seduce Melanthea, Palamede's betrothed, and Palamede's attempt to cuckold Rhodophil with Doralice, his friend's wife. Upon "discovery" they also find that they actually love their lawful partners after all. Now while there is no evidence to substantiate the contention that Shaw borrowed this plot from Dryden's, the fact remains that Shaw knew the works of Dryden, and paid the poet-dramatist tribute more than once. Shaw's comment on Dryden's use of the heroic couplet has already been cited; in at least one other instance Shaw alludes favorably to Dryden. When questioned on his elaborate Prefaces, he answered, "I write Prefaces as Dryden did . . . because I can."<sup>19</sup>

In still others of his plays Shaw's plots show similarities to those of Restoration Comedy. In *Arms and the Man* many of the same standard props and devices are in evidence. The soldier in the bedroom, his hiding, his "rival" Sergius (the typical *miles gloriosus*, like Farquhar's Captain Plume in *The Recruiting Officer*), the coquettish servant Louka (who has her counterpart in Farquhar's Cherry in *The Beaux' Stratagem* and Cibber's Mrs. Edging in *The Careless Husband*), and the final distribution of mates, with the accompanying paternal blessings based on Bluntschli's material estate in Switzerland. The latter comes, as it usually does in Restoration Comedy when men and women of seemingly unequal station wish a union, as a *deus ex machina*.

And in *Man and Superman* we also have a play of little plot, and even that little is somewhat contrived. Having Tanner as Ann's guardian is as bizarre a device for forcing plot as Horner's pretended impotence in Wycherley's *Country Wife*. Once again there is the parental objection, in this case Malone Sr. to Violet, because of her middle-class status. And Hector Malone has all the affectations of the Restoration fop, with his pretenses of diction and attempts to assimilate a foreign culture. He reminds us greatly of both Monsieur de Paris and Don Diego in Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing Master*.

<sup>19</sup>Three Plays for Puritans, Preface.

Further examples of plot similarities could be multiplied: here and there in practically every one of Shaw's plays one finds situations which are duplications of those in Restoration Comedies. These similarities and the others of characterization, dialogue, use of wit, setting, and mechanics are but characteristic of the comedy of manners, regardless of the century in which the manners are found to be amusing. In spite of the abundant evidence that shows the similarity of Shaw's comedies to those of the Restoration, no one can claim that he copied them or even modelled his own plays on them. Whether or not he actually did is still conjectural, but the evidence of familiarity, the logic of human nature being attracted subconsciously to what one openly rejects, the parallels in the various elements of dramatic art, and the general similarity of tone all point to a definite kinship of the two types. Shaw himself admitted the possibility, and even probability of his being influenced by older forms. At the end of the Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*, he said:

... I do not find myself able to proceed otherwise than as former playwrights have done. . . . My stories are the old stories; my characters are the familiar harlequin and columbine, clown and pantaloons . . . my stage tricks and suspenses and thrills and jests are the ones in vogue when I was a boy, by which time my grandfather was tired of them. . . . It is a dangerous thing to be hailed at once . . . as above all things original. . . . I am a crow who has followed many ploughs.

One of these ploughs seems to have been Restoration Comedy.

# The Dramatist's Dilemma: an Interpretation of *Major Barbara*

by Ozy<sup>1</sup>

*"You must always let yourself think about everything. And you must think about everything as it is, not as it is talked about. . . . We should never accept anything reverently without asking it a great many very searching questions."*

The critic-analyst should approach the interpretative aspects of a dramatic work by Shaw with the utmost caution, as Shaw was singularly meticulous in the construction of his major plays. Themes and counter-themes thread their way without collision or confusion through perfectly balanced dramatic structures. Though one may disagree (at great personal risk) with some of the conclusions, one cannot but envy the lucidity of expression, the originality of viewpoint, the debating skill and the general strategy from which these conclusions are developed. It is, then, somewhat of a shock when one comes face to face with what appears to be a Shavian cropper. One questions one's senses.

I first met Andrew Undershaft, broadsiding his salvos from the pages of *Major Barbara*, on a cargo steamer somewhere on the Atlantic about 1935. As a seasoned mariner, I can safely state no stormy sea buffeted my vessel as I was buffeted by Shaw and Undershaft. Like Cusins, I also reeled before the force of Undershaft's terrifying logic and found myself re-examining, or rather, examining for the first time, my concepts of the governed and governing classes, poverty, war and the true function of organized religion. In the course of the years, *Major Barbara*, preface, play and motion picture have been re-read, seen and re-seen; and Undershaft continues to roar away with undiminished vigor.

As I know of no evidence of any kind to indicate that Shaw was ever in any dilemma, the title chosen for this essay is unintentionally misleading. However, I timidly suggest that he *should* have been in one, so far as Andrew Undershaft is concerned, and that Undershaft's intellectual artillery, though extraordinarily accurate and devastating, produced at least one hangfire which may yet explode and dispose of this

<sup>1</sup> The pseudonymous Ozy frequently writes on Shavian subjects.

rash and cataracted observer. Other critics have dealt with other aspects of *Major Barbara*. Here I am solely concerned with the philosophy of a munitions manufacturer, whether or not he ultimately rejected that philosophy, whether or not he was aware of that rejection, and the extent of Shaw's responsibility.

*Major Barbara*, written in 1905 during Shaw's forty-ninth year, is a play dealing with, among other things, the philosophy of one Andrew Undershaft, a manufacturer of the weapons of war. During the course of this play, Undershaft issues a challenge to one of the principals which, in this writer's opinion, is a stunning inversion of the portrait Shaw so carefully painted of Undershaft. Several selections from the play are herewith reprinted so that we may focus upon the Undershaft philosophy in order to contrast the alleged contradiction. The characters concerned in these extracts are, besides Undershaft,

CUSINS: the professor of Greek, engaged to

BARBARA: a major in the Salvation Army, daughter to Undershaft.

STEPHEN: Undershaft's son, English to the core.

LADY BRITOMART: Undershaft's estranged wife.

LOMAX: the noodle-headed young man engaged to Sarah, Undershaft's other daughter.

In the preface to *Major Barbara*, Shaw views Undershaft with a surprising degree of personal identification — indicated by the use of the word *knows* instead of *believes*:

[Undershaft is] a man who, having grasped the fact that poverty is a crime, knows that when society offered him the alternative of poverty or a lucrative trade in Death and Destruction, it offered him not a choice between humble virtue and opulent villainy, but between cowardly infamy and energetic enterprise.

With these first strokes to the character of Undershaft, Shaw anticipated that a number of his readers would be shocked and/or confused by Undershaft's trenchant frankness. He offers encouragement to this group in the preface:

Andrew Undershaft's views will not perplex you in the least . . . unless indeed his constant sense that he is only the instrument of a will or Life Force which uses him for purposes wider than his own, may puzzle you.

From this we may infer that since Shaw considered Undershaft an instrument of the Life Force, a trade in Death and Destruction is one of the devices which assists Creative Evolution in its pursuit of Godhead through the human race.

In Act III Undershaft reveals the source of his driving philosophy when he declares bitterly:

I was an east ender. I moralized and starved until one day I swore that I would be a full-fed free man at all costs; that nothing would stop me except a bullet, neither reason nor morals nor the lives of other men. I said "Thou shalt starve 'ere I starve;" and with that word I became free and great.



It is, therefore, no surprise when, as a logical consequence, he is able to declare later in life:

To be wealthy is with me a point of honor for which I am prepared to kill at the risk of my own life.

I am a millionaire. That is my religion and there are two things necessary to salvation: Money and Gunpowder.

As the play develops, Undershaft (who has been separated from his family for more than twenty years) proceeds to mount an attack upon the moral and spiritual foundation of his daughter Barbara. The purpose of the assault is to break Barbara away from the Salvation Army, furnish her with a new morality and prepare her for the succession to the Undershaft inheritance — the factory of Death and Destruction. "I shall hand on my torch to my daughter," he declares in Act II. "She shall make converts and preach my gospel — Money and Gunpowder. Freedom and power. Command of life and command of death."

Undershaft has found that he must consider Barbara a potential successor as it has become exceedingly difficult to locate an eligible male candidate. To achieve this conversion of Barbara (and later Cusins) Undershaft is in turn — as the occasion requires — crafty, charming, brutal, gentle and cruel — in short — Machiavellian. Witness the following exchange in Act II which takes place before the entire family, but is, in fact, addressed specifically to Barbara:

UNDERSHAFT: Quite so. But consider a moment. Here I am, a profiteer in mutilation and murder. I find myself in a specially amiable humor just now because, this morning, down at the foundry, we blew 27 dummy soldiers into fragments with a gun which formerly destroyed only 13.

LOMAX: Well, the more destructive war becomes the sooner it will be abolished, eh?

UNDERSHAFT: Not at all. The more destructive war becomes the more fascinating we find it. No, Mr. Lomax; I am obliged to you for making the usual excuse for my trade; but I am not ashamed of it. I am not one of those men who keep their morals and their business in water-tight compartments. All the spare money my trade rivals spend on hospitals, cathedrals and other receptacles for conscience money, I devote to experiments and researches in improved methods of destroying life and property. I have always done so; and I always shall. Therefore your Christmas card moralities of peace on earth and goodwill among men are of no use to me. Your Christianity, which enjoins you to resist not evil, and to turn the other cheek, would make me a bankrupt. My morality — my religion — must have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it.

STEPHEN: You speak as if there were half a dozen moralities and religions to choose from, instead of one true morality and one true religion.



UNDERSHAFT: For me there is only one true morality; but it might not fit you, as you do not manufacture aerial battle-ships. There is only one true morality for every man; but every man has not the same true morality.

Apart from the ominous prediction, "The more destructive war becomes, the more fascinating we find it," which deserves attention of itself, Undershaft proves himself no mincer of words. Calling a gun a gun, and murder murder, he matter-of-factly states that he is a profiteer in mutilation and murder, that he is not ashamed of it and that he spends all his spare money to find improved methods of destroying life and property. He declares unequivocally: "I have always done so, and I always shall." And, as Barbara listens, he scores and ridicules the universality of a Christian morality.

Act II, scene 1, in the Salvation Army shelter. Barbara has just refused to accept either Bill Walker's one pound "conscience money" or Undershaft's two pence "blood money." Salvation Army Commissioner Mrs. Baines enters to announce that whiskey maker Bodger has donated £5000 to keep the shelters open during the coming winter, provided some other source matches it with an equal amount. Undershaft promptly writes out a check for the other £5000 while Barbara watches in disbelieving horror. Cusins, sarcastically praising Bodger's unselfishness, prompts the following from Undershaft:

I also may claim a little disinterestedness. Think of my business! think of the widows and orphans! the men and lads torn to pieces with shrapnel and poisoned with lyddite! the oceans of blood, not one drop of which is shed in a really just cause! the ravaged crops! the peaceful peasants forced, women and men to till their fields under the fire of opposing armies on pain of starvation! The bad blood of the fierce little cowards at home who egg on others to fight for the gratification of their national vanity! All this makes money for me; I am never richer, never busier than when the papers are full of it. Well, it is your work to preach peace and goodwill to men. Every convert you make is a vote against war. Yet I give you this money to help to hasten my own commercial ruin.

This extraordinary outburst is the playwright's device to dramatize sharply the opposing moralities, and to add more brush strokes to the portrait of the Cannon Colossus. It incidentally completes the destruction of Major Barbara, who removes the S from her collar and transfers it to her father's lapel. The last line is a typical bit of Shavian irony.

Act II, scene 2 brings father and son together for that man-to-man chat. Stephen has repudiated the Undershaft inheritance, much to the relief of his father who is grateful to the point of offering Stephen any one of a half-dozen other careers, including that of a high government post. He adds an irritating comment or two on hot-air governments, particularly the British government.

STEPHEN: (*outraged*) I am sorry, sir, that you force me to forget the respect due to you as my father. I am an Englishman; and I will not hear the Government of my country insulted.

UNDERSHAFT: (*With a touch of brutality*) The Government of your country! I am the government of your country; Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft? No, my friend: you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesn't. You will find out that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and the military. And in return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman. Government of your country! Be off with you, my boy, and play with your caucuses and leading articles and historic parties and great leaders and burning questions and the rest of your toys. I am going back to my counting-house to pay the piper and call the tune.

With this speech, Shaw has completed his portrait of Undershaft, and the play rushes toward the incident which is the excuse for this articles. Undershaft has decided against Barbara in favor of Cusins, who, in spite of his strenuous objections, has become the most eligible candidate to succeed Undershaft. They have just concluded the salary arrangements (Act III, scene 2):

BARBARA: (*to Cusins*) Is the bargain closed? Does your soul belong to him now?

CUSINS: No: The price is settled; that is all. The real tug of war is still to come. What about the moral question?

LADY BRITOMART: There is no moral question in the matter at all. Simply sell cannons and weapons to people whose cause is right and just, and refuse them to foreigners and criminals.

UNDERSHAFT: (*determinedly*) No: none of that. You must keep the true faith of an Armorer, or you don't come in here.

CUSINS: What on earth is the true faith of an Armorer?

UNDERSHAFT: To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them, without respect of persons or principles: to aristocrat and republican, to Nihilist and Tsar, to Capitalist and Socialist, to Protestant and Catholic, to burglar and policeman, to black man, white man, and yellow man, to all sorts and conditions, all nationalities, all faiths, all follies, all causes and crimes.

CUSINS: If I take my neck out of the noose of my own morality, I am not going to put it into the noose of yours. I shall sell cannons to whom I please and refuse them to whom I please. So there!

UNDERSHAFT: From the moment when you become Andrew Undershaft, you will never do as you please again.

With these pronouncements, Undershaft has established the operating basis for Cusins from which withdrawal becomes impossible. It is clear that the only question an Armorer can raise is "Does the buyer have the price?" The buyer's principles or lack of them are of no concern to the Armorer. Cusins, *in articulo mortis*, still struggles feebly (Act III, scene 2):

CUSINS: But you are driving me against my nature. I hate war.

UNDERSHAFT: Hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated. *Dare you make war on war? Here are the means. . . .*<sup>2</sup>

*Abracadabra!* Ten words and time stands paralyzed! Ten words and Cusins is transfixed in a strabismic vision of a war-less world of tomorrow! Ten words and the soul of Barbara stirs again! Ten words and an historic moment in the theatre has arrived.

Now Undershaft's "*Dare you make war on war?*" is great theatre — magnificent theatre — but what does it mean? Is Undershaft inviting Cusins to liquidate Undershaft? Is he suggesting that by undercutting prices Krupp, Schneider-Cruesot, Vickers, Du Pont and War will be driven from the world? Perhaps he means to re-tool the factories and beat swords back into plowshares!

And what is the significance of "Here are the means . . ."? Does it imply that Cusins-Undershaft-Lazarus must develop a super-weapon to be used only against the war-mongers? Or are they to distribute arms freely and exclusively to the Peter Shirleys so that they may wage war against the Andrew Undershafts? Surely, the professor of Greek is baffled. If he is, in Act III, scene 2 he conceals it carefully:

CUSINS: (to Barbara) Your father's challenge has beaten me. Dare I make war on war? I dare. I must. I will.

More great theatre. Undershaft's challenge to Cusins is a staggering blow to everyone, including Undershaft. But no one seems to be aware of it. With ten words, Undershaft has reduced the Armorer's Faith to a meaningless absurdity, and, without the slightest evidence of gagging, swallows his own words, "You will never do as you please again," uttered only seconds before. With ten words, Undershaft turns himself inside out and black becomes white — a *volte face* unparalleled in dramatic literature.

The predicament of these ten words can be resolved, in a theatrical sense, by directing that the actor portraying Undershaft deliver these words as the Machiavellian Undershaft would deliver them — an additional inducement to entrap Cusins into the mutilation and murder business. That is, slyly, cynically, out of the corner of his eye, triumphantly sardonic. This byplay, though it escapes Cusins' notice, is not lost on the audience, who can see clearly the method and effect of Undershaft's *coup de grace*.

<sup>2</sup> Italics are not Shaw's, but the author's.

But this is only dramaturgical patchwork as there are no instructions from Shaw how this line should be treated. The only living evidence of Shaw's attitude toward this business may be seen in the film *Major Barbara* (1940), a superb production, beautifully performed. The filming of this play, though directed by Gabriel Pascal, was under the direct supervision of G.B.S., and one must assume that when Robert Morley dramatically and idealistically delivered himself of the challenge to make war on war, it had the curious but responsible support of Shaw.

With an apprehensive eye on the previously mentioned hangfire, this writer submits that Shaw was uncomfortably aware of the contradiction in Undershaft. Not knowing, perhaps, how to resolve it, he released a swarm of lyrical but cryptic words through Cusins in Act III, scene 2, in an effort to eclipse the significance of Undershaft:

CUSINS:

This power which only tears men's bodies to pieces has never been so horribly abused as the intellectual power, the imaginative power, the poetic religious power that can enslave men's souls. As a teacher of Greek I gave the intellectual man weapons against the common man. I now want to give the common man weapons against the intellectual man. I love the common people. I want to arm them against the lawyers, the doctors, the priests, the literary men, the professors, the artists, and the politicians, who, once in authority, are more disastrous and tyrannical than all the fools, rascals, and impostors. I want a power simple enough for common men to use, yet strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good.

The real contradiction, however, is not in Andrew Undershaft, but in Bernard Shaw. Every word published by Shaw was consciously and subconsciously used to support, foster and propagate his belief that the Life Force, operating through the instrument of the human race, is in the process of evolving that race toward perfection. His play *Major Barbara* was no exception. And Andrew Undershaft, an instrument of the Death Force, battered his way into the play and laid waste to Love, Tolerance, Sacrifice, Honor, Pity and the other humbugs of our deadly virtues. Undershaft's words were there, waiting, ready-made for Shaw the Realist. And as Shaw's pen moved, Undershaft came alive and grew into a frightening giant that threatened to block his creator's purpose, until Shaw the Idealist demolished him with ten words — a miracle that transformed Undershaft from the Prince of Darkness into an Angel of Light.

George Bernard Shaw could not permit *Major Barbara* to reach its logical destination, as that result might have been the destruction of his own belief in the reason for his own existence.

## Reviews:

### The Fabric of Memory

Eleanor Robson Belmont, *The Fabric of Memory* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), \$5.50.

When this century began, Eleanor Robson was a beautiful, successful and talented actress whose mother and grandmother had been on the English stage. History of a kind was made when in 1910 she married the wealthy and social August Belmont. Society accepted her immediately. She retired from the theatre and threw herself into all the causes the times presented. *The Fabric of Memory* is a personal account of all those years. The first part of the book is so interesting that we are led to believe that she would allow us to become better acquainted with a person who had become a legend. The moment, however, she became a woman of society she began to fulfill its demands and from a vital person became a wraith-like great lady who permitted reticence to make of this book a mere backdrop with few *dramatis personae*.

Mrs. August Belmont would lead us to believe that she was the inspiration for *Major Barbara*. Shavians will have a field day. Only by publishing for the first time the whole series of her letters from George Bernard Shaw does the book become alive. Shaw saw her in London in Zangwill's *Merely Mary Ann* in 1904 and immediately approached her for the role of Major Barbara. Step by step he reveals himself as an entrepreneur of dimension. The letters, however, are open to interpretation. Obviously Mr. Shaw was "handling" an actress whom he wanted or needed for his play. Here we have not the playwright, but the producer. The letters are full of flattery and guile; once he found she had abandoned his play, she heard no more from him until she met him by chance at the Glyndebourne Festival decades later. Mr. Shaw in his letters to her described Major Barbara as a role that "isn't solemn . . . but full of fun." There is no doubt that her charm made itself felt and that he projected her into the part when he saw her in Zangwill's play. One is also led to believe by these letters that he was already in the throes of writing this play. It was a technique he had used in securing all of his leading ladies, and does in no way detract from the personality of Eleanor Robson. Unquestionably Miss Robson evoked from the imagination of the playwright the characterization which Shaw describes as Major Barbara. The vital fact which comes to light in these letters is Mr. Shaw's latent desire to write a play about a "saintly woman" and that Joan of Arc be dramatized. He even felt that perhaps Rostand should write it for Miss Robson. These passages are of major interest in relation to the time element of the inception of the play which was not to take form until it emerged as *Saint Joan* in 1923. All this was unquestionably the Shaw pattern when he was determined to secure a star



for his play. Though he came into her life briefly, he almost opens the book, does close it, and is mentioned two-thirds as much as her late husband.

This section also includes glimpses of Clyde Fitch, Israel Zangwill and vignettes of other literary personages. They are alive. It is when Mrs. Belmont leaves the theatre to fill her position in society that she allows events to become shadowy. The activities listed can be found in the files of any newspaper, and are as impersonal. From this point onward she allows her new role to make her contributions appear trivial. She tells practically nothing of herself. As a great actress she fulfilled society's concept of the role Mrs. August Belmont should play. And why not? She *was* an accomplished actress.

— Sara Arlen<sup>1</sup>

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## Shavian News Notes

**G.B.S. WILL SETTLEMENT.** Shaw's testamentary wish that a portion of his estate be used to finance work and publicity for a more efficient and more phonetic alphabet will be carried out after all, but on a less grand scale than he conceived. This compromise settlement of the legal battle was announced on December 19, 1957 by the Appeal Court. The residuary legatees — the British Museum, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the National Gallery of Ireland — agreed to give the Public Trustee £8,300 for research and the publication of at least one book in the new alphabet. In his will Shaw asked that his play *Androcles and the Lion* be published in a volume with parallel texts in the old and the proposed new alphabets, with free distribution to all public libraries in the British Commonwealth and the United States and to all national libraries throughout the world. Additional copies would be sold to the general public. A competition for design of a new forty-letter alphabet has been authorized by the Public Trustee, with a prize of \$14,000. All designs to be entered in the competition must be received by January 1, 1959.

**THEATRE ROUND-UP.** Off-Broadway, Shavian drama continued abundant. In December *GOOD KING CHARLES'S GOLDEN DAYS* went into its twelfth month at the Downtown Theatre, while *THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE* opened at the Provincetown Playhouse. A limited engagement of *MAN OF DESTINY* played at the Sullivan Street Playhouse in October and early November.

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Arlen, artist and writer, is a member of the editorial board of *THE SHAW BULLETIN*.



**BACK TO METHUSELAH.** The one-evening adaptation of the marathon drama, scripted by Arnold Moss, is expected on Broadway in mid-March, after two months of touring. Staged by Margaret Webster, it features a cast of six, including Tyrone Power, Arthur Treacher, Valerie Bettis and Mr. Moss.

**THE BASHFUL GENIUS.** A play by Harold Callen about Shaw during his earlier years, including his courtship of Charlotte Payne-Townshend, **THE BASHFUL GENIUS**, may be seen in New York this season. The play has been announced as in prospect by the Theatre Guild.

**LONDON FAIR LADY.** The London production of the overwhelmingly successful musicalization of **PYGMALION** will open April 30. Enacting their original roles will be Rex Harrison as Higgins, Julie Andrews as Eliza and Stanley Holloway as Alfred Doolittle.

**AUGUSTUS DOES HIS BIT PERFORMED.** The one-act Shavian comedy lampooning the war effort on the home front in World War I received one of its rare productions on November 9, 1957. Presented by the State College (Pa.) Community Theatre, it starred native Britisher Dr. Sidney Bowhill as Augustus, supported by Frances Dachille and James Oblinger. The director was James Shull.

**FIRST UNDERGRADUATE COURSE IN G.B.S.** What is probably the first undergraduate course on the life and writings of Bernard Shaw began at Los Angeles State College in the Fall Semester, 1957, directed by Associate Professor Frederick Shroyer. Its aims: "to study at least 15 Shaw plays and consider many of the books and articles written about Shaw" and "to place Shaw in the context of the social history of his time and thus to study him in his relationships rather than as an isolated man."

**ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.** Archibald Henderson has received the Mayflower Cup for his *George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century*, which was published by Appleton-Century-Crofts. The award is made annually by the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, Inc., for the best non-fiction book of the year by a North Carolinian. It is the third time the association has honored Mr. Henderson for a biography of Shaw. In 1911, it awarded the Patterson Cup for *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works* and in 1932 the Mayflower Cup for *Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet*.

**SHADES OF MAJOR BARBARA.** Melbourne, Australia (Reuters) — John Archer, Salvation Army sergeant who had been suspended by the Army after he won \$22,400 in a lottery, has left most of his \$15,680 estate to the Army. But a Salvation Army spokesman has said: "We will not accept a penny of it."

Mr. Archer left \$112 each to three of his six children and directed that the balance of his estate be divided equally between two children's homes run by the Salvation Army. A fifty-two year-old stevedore, he died six weeks after his win, when excitement led to a stroke.

The Salvation Army accorded him full honors at his funeral.

# A Continuing Check-list of Shaviana

## I. Works by Shaw

- "The Great Fight that Wasn't," *Sports Illustrated*, May 27, 1957, pp. E9-E14. Abridged reprinting of account of Beckett-Carpentier fight in the Dec. 13, 1919 issue of the British journal *The Nation*. Companion piece to article by Eddie Eagan hereinafter noted.
- "Is Christianity a Failure?" *The Flying Dutchman* [student publication of Hofstra College], November 22, 1957, p. 3. Introduction by Dan H. Laurence. A letter signed by Shaw under the anagram Shendar Brwa, designed for publication in *The [London] Star* in 1888, as a contribution to a circulation-boosting series entitled "Is Christianity a Failure?" In the letter Shaw poses as a foreigner observing the incongruities between English profession and practice of Christianity.

## II. Shaviana — Books

- Balutowa, Bronislaw, *Dramat Bernarda Shaw*. Wroclaw, Poland, Ossolineum, 1957. A Polish study of the life and dramatic writings of G.B.S.
- Belmont, Eleanor Robson, *The Fabric of Memory*. New York, Straus and Cudahy, 1957. Mrs. Belmont's memoirs are reviewed in this issue.
- Bishop, George W., *My Betters*. London, Heineman, 1957. The author, theatre critic and literary editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, devotes four chapters and several illustrations to G.B.S. and his work.
- Lawrence, Elwood P., *Henry George in the British Isles*. East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1957. A detailed background study and frame of reference for Shavio-Fabian political and economic thought set in the perspective of George's five personal expositions of the ideas of *Progress and Poverty* in the British Isles, and the persistent impact of his message in later British political life: "As all Socialists admitted up to 1887, and as Webb and Shaw, representative Fabians, continued to believe, George's views on the land issue and his ability to put a case [for economic and social reform] in simple, moving terms, gave him common ground with British Socialists."
- Melchinger, S., *Drama zwischen Shaw und Brecht*. Bremen, 1957.
- Minney, Rubeigh J., *Next Stop — Peking*. London, George Newnes Ltd., 1957. The record of Mr. Minney's tour through "New China" includes two chapters on Shaw in China.
- Nickson, Richard, "The Art and Politics of the Later Plays of Bernard Shaw." Los Angeles, Calif., University of California dissertation (typescript and microfilm), 1957. Concerns Shavian drama from 1931 to 1950.
- Schindler, Bernhard, *George Bernard Shaw*. German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Veb Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1956. Concerns itself mainly with Shaw's plays as social criticism.
- Wilson, Colin, *Religion and the Rebel*. London, Gollancz, 1957. Contains a controversial chapter on Shaw. To be reviewed in the May number.

### III. Shaviana — Pamphlets and Periodicals

Auden, W. H., "Crying Spoils the Appearance," *New Yorker*, September 7, 1957, pp. 142-46. An extended and appreciative review of *My Dear Dorothea*, bolstered by much quotation from the volume reviewed.

Barber, George S., "Shaw's Contributions to Music Criticism," *PMLA* LXXII (December, 1957), 1005-1017. Shaw stands as an essentially pioneering figure in the history of music criticism. . . . Those contributions that Shaw offered to music were: (1) an application of economics and sociology to explain the artistic "scene;" (2) a theory of the educational and refining power of music; (3) a plea for jargon-free writing; (4) an insistence upon sincerity, subjectivity, and method as essential qualities of music criticism; (5) a championship of incorruptibility and superiority as characteristics of the critic; (6) a demand that the duty of the critic is to fight for excellence in performance and composition by magnifying faults and praising virtues."

Batson, Eric J., ed., *The Shavian*, no. 10 (September, 1957). The journal of The Shaw Society (London).

Eagan, Eddie, "A Visit with G.B.S.: Fight Critic," *Sports Illustrated*, May 27, 1957, pp. E2-E6. New York State's boxing commissioner recalls a talk on fistic subjects with Shaw and prints a Shavian letter on boxing (1948) for the first time.

Freemantle, Anne, "Shaw and Religion," *Commonweal*, December 6, 1957, pp. 249-51. "In his plays, Shaw is concerned with the relationship of men and women not to their own purpose but to that of the universe. . . . It was Shaw's conception that the intellectual love of truth is the highest possible human activity."

McKenna, Siobhan, "An Imaginary Conversation with George Bernard Shaw," *Esquire*, XLVIII (December, 1957), 194-95. G.B.S. converses with Miss McKenna on his favorite subjects in lines she culls from his published writings.

Smith, Warren S., "Reasonable Mystic, Laughing Prophet," *The Pulpit*, XXVIII (November, 1957), 24, 30-31. How mysticism replaced Marxism in Bernard Shaw: "The seeds of Shaw's mysticism were planted with the seeds of his socialism, but they matured in a slower rhythm. And after Peter Keegan's devastating insight on the material world of Tom Broadbent, it became evident that progress would have to happen deeper inside man."

Tauber, Abraham, "'My Fair Lady' and G.B.S.," *Word Study*, XXXIII (October, 1957), 1-4. A misleading title, as the article concerns Shaw's continuing interest in phonetics. Controversial points aired by Dr. Tauber are noted in "Shaw on Phonetics" — a sequel in the December (1957) number (pp. 4-5), including correspondence from William Chase and the author, and remarks of the editors.

### AUTHOR'S QUERY

Mr. Dan H. Laurence, Department of English, Hofstra College, Hempstead, N. Y., is working on a bibliography of the published writings of Bernard Shaw. He would appreciate hearing from readers about obscure Shaw items — pamphlets, newspaper and periodical contributions, forewords and contributions to works by other writers.

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To study and interpret George Bernard Shaw's writings, work and personality; to make him more widely understood and appreciated; and to provide a meeting ground for those who admire and respect the man.

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